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C O N F I D E N T I A L KINSHASA 000378

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TAGS: PGOV KPKO MOPS CG

SUBJECT: FIGHTING CONTINUES IN ITURI, MUTINEERS TO BE
COURT-MARTIALLED

REF: KINSHASA 359

Classified By: PolOff CBrown, reasons 1.4 b/d.

¶1. (C) Despite the suspension of Operation Ituri Engraver (reftel), fighting between militia elements and the Armed Forces of the DRC (FARDC) continues in Ituri District. Elements of the Patriotic Forces for Resistance in Ituri (FRPI) March 5 attacked MONUC and FARDC positions in Kagaba (approximately 25km south of Bunia) from the surrounding hills. According to MONUC military sources, MONUC helicopter gunships responded to the attack, killing several of the militia. MONUC could not provide a precise number of those killed in the fighting. MONUC and the FARDC suffered no casualties in the latest round of fighting.

¶2. (C) Following the March 5 attack, FARDC troops March 6 advanced on the FRPI positions and recaptured Kagaba. An internal MONUC report said FARDC and MONUC forces were still moving to control the whole area. As of March 6, MONUC forces are deployed in Kagaba and Medu, while FARDC troops are situated in Kagaba, Boga, Bukiringi and Bavi. MONUC sources report the FRPI currently has control over Aveba, Tchei and Geti.

¶3. (C) MONUC-Bunia Head of Office Sharouh Sharif told PolOff March 7 that twenty of the FARDC commandos who instigated the March 1 mutiny will face courts-martial at the military tribunal in Bunia. Sharif also said that none of the remaining FARDC commandos in Ituri had yet been transferred out of the region.

¶4. (C) According to an internal MONUC planning document, FARDC Chief of Staff Gen. Sylvain Mbuki, currently in Bunia to assess the military situation, has asked FARDC commanders for additional reinforcements. Mbuki reportedly requested troops be dispatched to Ituri by March 9.

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